



## SUBMISSION OF CLARECASTLE TIDY TOWNS TO DRAFT COUNTY CLARE DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2023-2029

Clarecastle Tidy Towns welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the draft County Clare Development Plan 2023-2029 which it considers a very important document.

The committee is supportive of the efforts of Clare County Council to develop the county in a planned and sustainable way.

This submission is being made with particular reference to the aims of the Tidy Towns Committee which are as follows -

### · Clarecastle Tidy Towns Aims

#### To enhance the appearance of Clarecastle,

- more attractive place to live, work & visit
- cementing community relationships,
- building pride in the community

#### To raise awareness of environmental issues

##### – Build a sustainable Clarecastle

- Promote Biodiversity and Climate action
- Sustainable Waste & Resource Management
- introducing sustainable change for Clarecastle to be the best it can be

#### To promote Local Business & sustainable Jobs

#### To promote Heritage & Historical assets of the area.

To deepen the partnership relationship with Clare Co Council & other Local Service Providers to jointly deliver on agreed specific projects and services

To encourage residents, retailers, and businesses to maintain their estates and premises & public spaces

To identify "Opportunities" as well as "black spots" and "problem areas", and develop strategies to deal with them effectively.

The Committee has worked very diligently to achieve these aims since its revival in 2009 and sees the submission on this draft plan as being part of its remit in this regard.

### Clarecastle Identity:

Located 3km south of Ennis and giving its name to the County, Clarecastle, while part of the census population of Ennis, strives to retain its own uniqueness and identity. The Clarecastle Tidy Towns Committee and the Clarecastle and Ballyea Heritage and Wildlife Group are particularly conscious that it is important that this separate identity continues into the future.

The village is traditional and picturesque in appearance retaining much of its 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> character. It is also favoured in its location by being situated immediately adjoining the River Fergus. It has the advantage of good road links to Ennis, Limerick and Shannon and is an important residential and employment centre in the County.

The fact that it immediately adjoins Ennis and acts as a visual introduction to the town from the south has made keeping its historic and visual identity extremely important looking to the future.



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In this regard, the Committee considers that the Council should include a specific objective in the Development Plan that the separate visual identity of the village be recognised and promoted.

We would advise that volume 3 of the plan itself could build on this recognition by ensuring that Clarecastle is noted on the maps produced – we refer in particular to the main zoning map in volume 3 that is titled 'Ennis' and not 'Ennis/Clarecastle'. Map 2 ('Ennis' transformational and opportunity sites) also refers only to 'Ennis' and not 'Ennis/Clarecastle'

Clarecastle & Ballyea Heritage & Wildlife group are particularly interested in getting the origins of Clarecastle and its significance to the naming of the County included in the County development plan and have submitted a brief summary explaining the significance of the word **Clár** ( see Appendix A)

The Committee is also particularly concerned that proposals for the Clareabbey roundabout redesign should include as part of its design brief that it provide a visual identity to the entrance/exit from Clarecastle creating a sense of visual and attractive distinction or place between the two settlements – it should also consider pedestrian and cyclist access issues at the roundabout and how we can promote safe routes for existing users and new users that will emerge from the Clareabbey Greenway between Clareabbey and Quin Road and provide for future traffic that will emerge from the extension of the greenway from Clareabbey To Clarecastle as well as potential link up to Ballaghafadda Amenity Proposal.

### **Tourism Development:**

One of the main reasons for this submission by the Tidy Towns Committee is its recognition that Clarecastle has great potential from a tourism point of view and that it can capitalise on its location and potential in the years ahead.

The Committee notes the Council's comments in this regard at CCDP V3 (a) 10 and 1.11.6 of volume 3 of the plan relating to the Ennis Municipal District Settlement plans where the following is stated –



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### CCDP Volume 3

#### Settlement Plan Objective

<b>Objective V3(a)10</b>	<p>It is an objective of Clare County Council:</p> <p>a) To develop Ennis as a 'tourism hub' offering a unique access point and base to explore the County and the wider region;</p> <p>b) To attract and provide for a year-round tourist product, by diversifying the existing strong tourism product based on heritage and culture into activity breaks, food tourism and the conference and convention market;</p> <p>c) To enhance the attractiveness of the Town Centre with greater pedestrian priority and environmental enhancements presenting an accessible family friendly town with a high quality of life;</p> <p>d) To develop a comprehensive 'brand' and marketing strategy and to actively promote Ennis as a tourist destination; and</p> <p>e) To support the development of Clarecastle as a centre for tourism activity.</p>
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#### 1.11.6 Tourism in Clarecastle

The tourism industry in the Clarecastle area is underdeveloped and significant opportunities exist for developments that will attract greater numbers of visitors to the area. The village is well situated in relation to transport links and local amenities and has the potential to become an important local tourist centre, building on accessibility to the water and the landscape in the vicinity. The rich heritage and historical importance of Clarecastle as a military base, commercial port and fishing village provide plentiful opportunities to raise its tourism profile. The objective in relation to tourism development in Clarecastle is:

- To facilitate the expansion of tourism infrastructure, facilities, entertainment and accommodation in Clarecastle.

The Ennis and Environs Local Area Plan will set out in greater detail a tourism strategy for Clarecastle.

The Committee welcomes the Council's recognition of the potential in the area of tourism and notes that the local area plan will develop the issue in more detail. It also welcomes the general objective to facilitate the expansion of its tourism infrastructure, facilitates, entertainment and accommodation. Notwithstanding this, the Committee would like the following to be taken into account in particular and mentioned in the overarching County plan –

- That the plan publish a walkway and cycle way map showing existing & proposed routes in/around the Ennis/Clarecastle area including pathway linkages between Clarecastle and the proposed Wetlands & Enterprise Area (transformational site) to be developed under the auspices of Ennis 2040
- That the greenway trail be extended to Clarecastle and onwards to the islands



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- That Clarecastle Quay previously known as the "Port of Clare" be designated as the trail head for the Mid-Clare section of the West Clare Greenway
- That the history of Clarecastle be particularly noted from a tourism point of view with such potential to host a local museum and Clare portal for Shannon Estuary Way
- Potential for Biodiversity / Wildlife Tourism in the area be reviewed as outlined in Section **1.11.5 Biodiversity and Tourism**

### Public Infrastructure:

The Committee is concerned that the wastewater system at Clareabbey has enough capacity to cater for planned growth in Clarecastle and the southern Ennis area.

We note the statement at 1.14.5 of volume 3 (Ennis Municipal District Settlements) which states that the Clarecastle Agglomeration Upgrade is currently underway and that *'the existing Clareabbey WWTP will have sufficient capacity to cater for the current load for the area along with some added capacity'*

It is not clear what added capacity is available but we note objection V3 (a) 18 of volume 3 of the plan which states –

CCDP Volume 3 Settlement Plan Objective	
Objective V3(a)18	It is an objective of Clare County Council: a) To advocate the provision by Irish Water of adequate wastewater facilities to accommodate the target population and the employment potential of the Plan area in accordance with statutory obligations as set out by EU and National Policy; and b) To facilitate the development of new, or upgrade of existing, wastewater treatment facilities to serve Ennis and Clarecastle and their environs subject to protection of the environment, and in compliance with the Habitats Directive and other environmental considerations.

The Committee is supportive of this objective but notes the significance of objective V3 18 (b) re protection of the environment and Habitats and would welcome additional suitable tree cover and landscaping to enhance the overall appearance of the site. The committee also noted the requirement to remove any odours emanating from water treatment plant

### 1.14.1 Strategic Aims for Infrastructure

- Enhance the potential for green infrastructure links between recreational facilities at Lees Road, West Clare Railway line, Ballyallia Lake, River Fergus and Clarecastle.
- To provide a safe and efficient multi-modal network of transport to serve the needs of people, goods and services travelling to and within Ennis;



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Clarecastle Tidy Towns welcome these green infrastructure aims and would add the expansion of Greenway from Clareabbey to Clarecastle Quay (which would be an ideal Trailhead linking West Clare Greenway to Shannon Estuary Way) and further south to the islands. The linkage should also include linkage from Clarecastle's People Park, Clarecastle GAA amenity Park through to Ballybeg lake & woods and Clare Abbey

We also fully support **Goal 15 Travel and Mobility** and feel that Clarecastle is ideally suited for "a network of 'green' routes to link neighbourhoods and the Village Centre to the wider rural area – We also welcome the aims outlined in **1.9 Travel, Mobility and 10 Minute Town that recognises** the importance of sustainable transport and the modal shift from private transport and would welcome a detailed plan that will deliver for Clarecastle the improvements required in the public realm and walking and cycling infrastructure as outlined in section 1.9 to ensure the safe and pleasant movement of people throughout Clarecastle and beyond.

### **Transport:**

Clarecastle Tidy Towns fully support the statement that "Bus transport forms a fundamental element of the overall public transport infrastructure linking the towns of Ennis and Shannon with Limerick City and beyond by means of a frequent, high-quality service and request that the proposed Ennis Bus Service would ensure strong connectivity to and from Clarecastle and makes reference to Clarecastle in the Service".

We also welcome the positive findings of a feasibility study regarding a bus service from Clarecastle to the Gort Road Business Park in Ennis, serving Clare Road, Clonroad, New Road, Steele's Terrace and the Gort Road.

### **Parking:**

The Committee is concerned about the level of parking serving the main 'mixed use' area of the village. This mixed use area is shown on the extract from the main 'Ennis' zoning map in volume 3.

The Council will note that there is only a very small public car park serving this area. The car park also serves the playground to the rear and is used regularly in association with this recreational use.



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### Extract from zoning map 'Ennis' in volume 3 of County Plan

The Committee request the Council to include an objective in the plan to increase discrete off-street public parking in Clarecastle in development/redevelopments projects in the general area. – we would also like the layout design of both the Church car park and the car park adjacent to Abbey Hall to be reviewed and upgraded.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns support the recent "Town Centre First Policy" that will focus on breathing new life into our Towns and villages by tackling vacancy and dereliction and making our villages better places to live, work, raise a family and visit.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns would welcome initiatives that will bring such an outcome to the core village area.

## Government launches first ever Town Centre First policy

From [Department of Rural and Community Development](#); Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

Published on 4 February 2022

Last updated on 7 February 2022

- Major new strategy to tackle vacancy, combat dereliction and breathe new life into town centres
- Network of Town Regeneration Officers to drive future development
- Unprecedented investment to make our towns better places to live, work and raise a family
- Suite of supports and tools to help businesses and local communities deliver on their unique vision for their area
- New Policy to deliver on the objectives of 'Housing for All' and 'Our Rural Future'



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Clarecastle Tidy Towns are acutely aware of the daily difficulties for "on street" residents and businesses in historic narrow streets like Clarecastle following the very welcome recent streetscape enhancements that have made our footpaths now accessible to all. But in doing so makes direct vehicle access for residents to their street entrances and in some cases access to both front and rear entrances very difficult.

Parking & accessibility are cited as a major issue both for commercial and residential regeneration of vacant premises in the village core.

The post office in Clarecastle in particular is located some distance along the main street from the small corner car park and the car park is often full making it very inconvenient for elderly people in particular.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns are requesting Clare County Council to review new off-street parking sites and in particular would request the Council to review the vacant business building running parallel behind the main street with access to the main street, be purchased, redeveloped and used as a car park.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns would also highlight the need to address the very unsightly derelict site between Clarecastle Village and Clarecastle Bridge that has such a negative impact on approach to Clarecastle.

### **Transformational/Opportunity Sites**

The Committee notes that two of the biggest transformational and opportunity sites are in or in the immediate catchment of Clarecastle - we refer to the opportunity site (OP19) at Roche and the more long term strategic development of the Wetlands and Enterprise area proposed under 'Ennis 2040'.

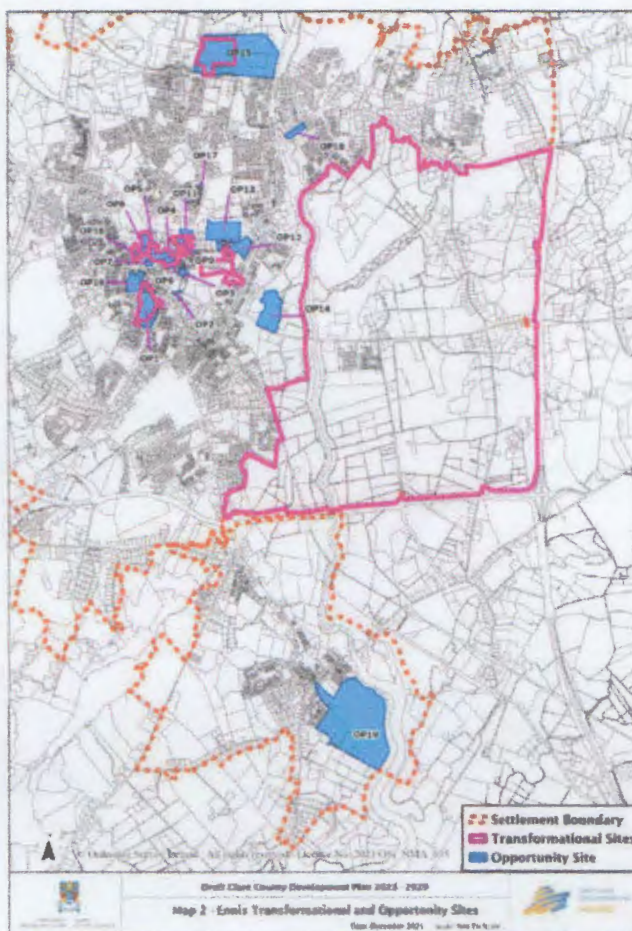
It is noted that the strategic provisions of Ennis 2040 are to be incorporated into the new County Plan.



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The development of these two areas will have significant implications for Clarecastle with the Roche site located within the village and the wetlands/enterprise encompassing the Clareabbey area

Map 2 - Ennis Transformational and Opportunity Sites



The wetlands proposals is very welcome and will enable the creation of new nature walks and we would welcome River visibility opportunities on the proposed Greenways. We would also put forward the enhancement of Clare Abbey as an ideal site for information centre for the Wetlands

**Map 2: Ennis Transformational & Opportunity Sites**

The Committee welcomes the recognition of the Roche site "T57 Roche site" as an opportunity site, noting the fact that it is a site of scale and can be a significant asset. It is also noted at TS7 of the plan that it is also 'a challenge in terms of deciding on use, scale, phasing and infrastructural investment'

- Takes full advantage of the existing site use (e.g. infrastructure);
- Have a clear employment focus and be attractive to National Agencies due to its scale;
- Have a new 'front door' to the Town and a 'front room' to the River Fergus;
- Provide linkages into and around Clarecastle and along the River Fergus; and
- Maximise the potential for diversity of use.

The Committee notes that "A masterplan will be prepared during the life of this Plan to facilitate and encourage the appropriate redevelopment of this brownfield site. "





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The Committee welcomes the fact that such a masterplan is to be prepared for the site and hopes that the Council will provide the public an opportunity to input into any such plan.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns sought full remediation of the site following the final closure announcement for the site on the basis that a brown field site will provide the best means of providing **sustainable jobs** on the 88 acre site and fully support the clear employment focus.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns have also brought into focus the other tangible assets of the site such as extension of existing Boundary at Clarecastle Quay to provide more usable space in that area and River bank access that could allow for a Greenway between Clarecastle Quay and the Islands.

The Heritage & Wildlife group are also very keen that the old Famine road route that linked Lissane to the Quay is preserved if possible and built into any new plans for the site



### Site C4 & TOU1 Ballaghafadda West, Clarecastle

Clarecastle Tidy Towns have just received notification re the [Draft Ballaghafadda Amenity and Recreation Plan](#) published on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 and we welcome the publication of the plan and fully agree with the enormous potential for Council owned lands at Ballaghafadda West, Killadysart Road, Clarecastle, Co. Clare

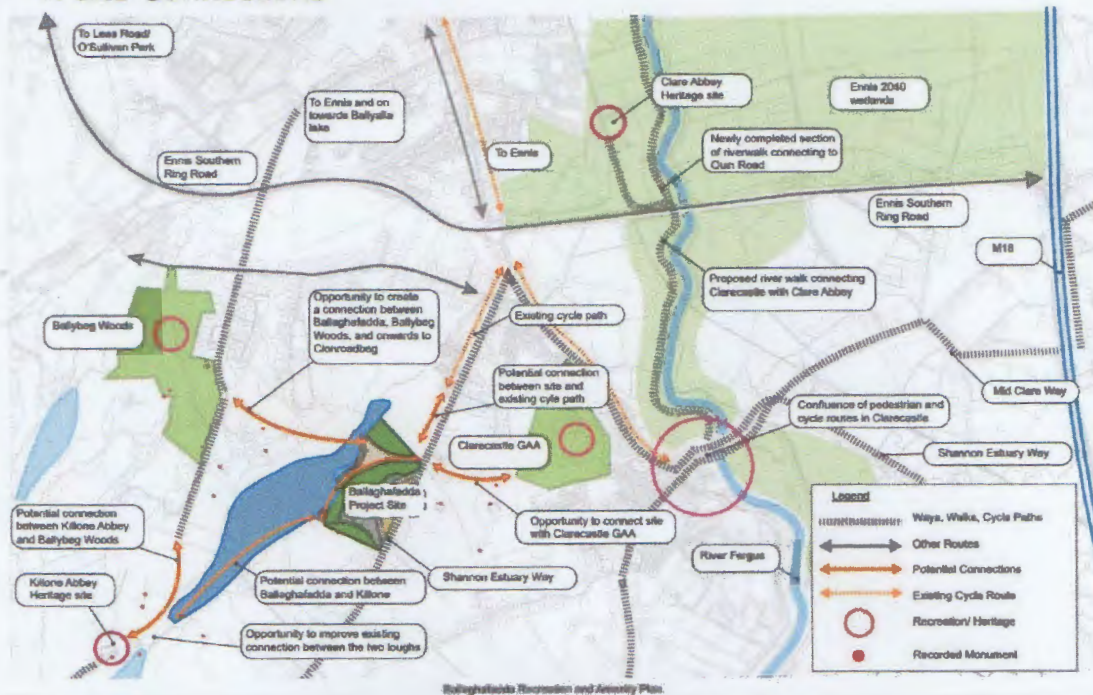
Clarecastle Tidy Towns welcome the vision outlined in the documentation and also wish to emphasise the importance to protect the existing ecological value of the site.



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We also support the development of a **"template for strategic decision making in relation to future development of the site to support the local community, economic growth, tourism, heritage awareness, amenity and recreation in the area."**

### 4. Site Connections



[The Draft Ballaghafadda Amenity and Recreation Plan](#) sets out a vision to enhance the site's natural beauty, enrich its ecological value and to encourage engagement with the landscape, lough and its surroundings. A network of pathways and boardwalks will be carefully set within a naturalised woodland, meadow and wetland landscape. Interpretation of the site's natural and cultural heritage will be provided through signage and public art. Activities on the site may include walking, cycling, wildlife watching, natural play, and low impact water sports, such as swimming, rowing and kayaking with supporting onsite facilities for outdoor recreation, community and tourism requirements as appropriate to the site and objectives of the County Development Plan. There is also future potential opportunity to enhance and consider the creation of new linkages from Clarecastle village, Ballybeg Woods and Killone Lough to this site.

The preparation of the Ballaghafadda Amenity & Recreation Plan ensures that there is a template for strategic decision making in relation to future development of the site to support the local community, economic growth, tourism, heritage awareness, amenity and recreation in the area. It should be noted that the objective of this draft plan is to provide a strategic vision and the development of many of the key objectives therein would require further detailed design, assessment, and public consultation through a statutory planning process. Although there is no immediate project funding allocated, it is intended that this document will guide the evolution of the site at community-based level and act as supporting documentation to any potential future grant applications.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns would strongly argue that this template should involve all potential projects in the Clarecastle area.

Looking at a map of Clarecastle there are major Projects in the development Plan for the Roche Site, The Wetlands and Ballybeg (**Ballaghafadda West, Clarecastle**) along with a plan to develop the tourism potential for Clarecastle area.



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There are existing plans to promote the Shannon Estuary Way and Clarecastle Heritage Group's project for a heritage trail and museum and Clarecastle GAA's proposals for a major amenity & recreation park. The Clarecastle Tidy Towns ongoing projects with Clare Co Council re Public realm and open spaces enhancements that have transformed the appearance of the village and Clarecastle Quay and People Park and other open spaces and ongoing projects with Clare Co Council to further enhance our public realm that will bring Clarecastle in line with best practice principles of universal access and permeability. Also projects to support village core renewal, addressing vacant shops and dwellings and dereliction and alignment of Clarecastle Biodiversity Plans with Clare Co Council landscaping and tree maintenance plans.

To facilitate the above and give all the community an opportunity to have a say in the future development of an inclusive Clarecastle and in particular bringing forward proposals re community needs that have not been addressed to date, there is a need for a comprehensive **Clarecastle Enhancement and Community Plan** that will bring all these projects together and give the community the opportunity to have their say and make Clarecastle a better place to live, work, and visit.

### **Summary:**

As outlined at the start of the document, Clarecastle Tidy Towns welcomes this opportunity to make a submission on the draft County Clare Development Plan 2023-2029 which it considers a very important document.

We are very much aware of the necessity of building a strong partnership with Clare Co Council and the importance of strategic planning and a shared vision that will enhance Clarecastle and make it a better place to live, work and visit. We are very much aware how those plans lead to funding opportunities as we have witnessed with the streetscape enhancements funded from the Towns & Villages Renewal Scheme and the major upgrade of the People's Park and creation of new Greenway from Outdoor Recreation infrastructure Scheme funding.

We have at the outset identified the very close ties between Ennis & Clarecastle and the importance of Clarecastle and other Villages and settlements retaining their own unique identity. We have identified that Clarecastle as a village with its own identity does not have its own Map and we have requested that Clarecastle is noted on the maps produced – we refer in particular to the main zoning map in volume 3 that is titled 'Ennis' and not '**Ennis/Clarecastle**'.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns do not have a problem with this configuration as it should effectively mean that Clarecastle should enjoy the same level of services that Ennis enjoys re operational public realm



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management and public realm improvements as defined in section 18.3.1  
**The Importance of Place and the Public Realm**

le Clarecastle Village will receive public realm regeneration and urban renewal initiatives similar to what is envisaged for Ennis.

Clarecastle Tidy Towns have worked extremely hard since 2009 to improve Clarecastle that was left in a very poor state post the downturn and the opening of the N85 Bypass. Quite a large amount of the effort was put into street, approach roads and open space maintenance that would not be expected of a group in an urban environment. We are extremely grateful for the re-introduction of street sweeping which has greatly helped in this regard and we wish to acknowledge the continued support of Clare Co Council Roads team that are so helpful. However there are still some anomalies that need to be addressed such as urban enhancements like provision of seasonal floral displays and on street shrub bed maintenance, park maintenance, festival lighting etc that need to be addressed. Clarecastle Tidy Towns would welcome the opportunity to include these projects in our annual plan.

**Regards,**

**Christy Leyden**

**Chairperson Clarecastle Tidy Towns**

*25<sup>th</sup> March 2022*

**Eric Shaw**

**Clarecastle and Ballyea Heritage & Wildlife Group**



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### Appendix A

#### County Of Clare named after the Bridge of Clare



#### Clarecastle – Clár Átha Dá Caradh

##### The Wooden Bridge Fording the Two Weirs

The Annals of the Four Masters of 1270 AD, notes the name of *Clár Atha Dá Caradh*<sup>i</sup>. The word Clare is an anglicised version of the word *Clár* meaning a board or plank. At a point in the River Fergus, there is a small island. In the past, there were two weirs on either side of the island. In time, wooden planks were placed across the weirs to aid in crossing. These two crossing points developed into wooden bridges and later stone structures. The larger of the bridges became known as the Clare Bridge. The settlement that grew up around the Clare Bridge became known as the Village of Clare and that is the name that appeared on maps up to the 20<sup>th</sup> C.

As well as a crossing point, the Clare Bridge was also a defensive position and a series of fortifications and castles were placed on the island over the centuries. The Clare Castle that can be seen today is largely an O'Brien castle of the mid-16<sup>th</sup> C.

The English administration in 1570, named the County after the Bridge of Clare<sup>ii</sup> because of its pivotal role in the economy of the area.

With the passage of time, the Village of Clare and Clare Castle became known as Clare Castle and in more recent times, Clarecastle.

#### Clare Bridge, Port of Clare, Pool of Clare, Clare Abbey, Village of Clare, County of Clare

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<sup>i</sup> Annals of the Four Master, 1270

<sup>ii</sup> The Story of Clare and It People, Clare County Council, 2020, p.2